

Syphilis

Definition: Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. It has often been called "the great imitator" because so many of the signs and symptoms are indistinguishable from those of other diseases

Transmission: Syphilis is passed from person to person through direct contact with syphilis sore. Sores occur mainly on the external genitals, vagina, anus, or in the rectum. Sores also can occur on the lips and in the mouth. Transmission of the organism occurs during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Pregnant women with the disease can pass it to the babies they are carrying.

Symptoms:

Primary Stage

1. **Appearance of a chancre sore that is** usually firm, round, small, and painless.
2. It appears at the spot where syphilis entered the body
3. The time between infection with syphilis and the start of the first symptom can range from 10 to 90 days (average 21 days).

Secondary Stage

1. Skin rash and mucous membrane lesions
2. The characteristic rash of secondary syphilis may appear as rough, red, or reddish brown spots both on the palms of the hands and the bottoms of the feet.
3. symptoms of secondary syphilis may include fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and fatigue

Latent Stage

1. The latent (hidden) stage of syphilis begins when primary and secondary symptoms disappear.
2. In the late stages of syphilis, the disease may damage the internal organs, including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints.
3. Signs and symptoms of the late stage of syphilis include difficulty coordinating muscle movements, paralysis, numbness, gradual blindness, and dementia.
4. This damage may be serious enough to cause death

Precautions and PPE considerations: Normal PPE such as gloves should be adequate

Treatments: Syphilis is easy to cure in its early stages. A single intramuscular injection of penicillin, an antibiotic, will cure a person who has had syphilis for less than a year.

Work Guidelines: Personnel will be evaluated by the infectious disease doctor if an exposure is suspected.